



Action for Boston Community Development

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Division of Global Migration & Quarantine
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
US Department of Health and Human Services
Attn: Part 34 NPRM Comments
1600 Clifton Road, NE, MS E-03
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Docket No. CDC- 2008-0001

Docket Title: Medical Examination of Aliens – Removal of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection from Definition of Communicable Disease of Public Health
Significance

To whom it may concern:

As the grantee for the Greater Boston Title X-funded family planning program that serves over 30,000 unduplicated clients a year, ABCD writes to support the proposed regulation to lift the ban on travel and immigration to the United States by HIV-positive individuals and remove HIV infection from the list of “communicable diseases of public health significance” (42 CFR Part 34).

In 1987, when the ban was enacted, little was known about the transmission and prevention of HIV. More than 20 years later, the transmission, prevention and treatment of this disease has been thoroughly, scientifically examined and we know with certainty that transmission does not occur through casual contact but through specific risk behaviors. Non-US born visitors and immigrants who are living with HIV do not pose a public health risk to the citizens of this country. Further, this pandemic has been present in the United States since the time of the ban. Limiting or preventing entry into the US will not prevent infection in the US; there are an estimated 1 million people living with HIV in the US currently.

The health and well being of those living with HIV is contingent upon a trusting and open relationship with their primary care physician. The ban currently in effect discourages non-US born individuals from disclosing their HIV status to their physician and therefore inhibits access to HIV medical care, treatment and support services. A lack of HIV-specific medical care may make non-US born residents more likely to suffer from preventable complication of HIV infection. We know that individuals can live many years with chronic HIV infection; transmission and complications are preventable with education and knowledge. Non-US born residents deserve the same education, knowledge and medical care regarding HIV infection as their US-born counterparts and should be able to access these services without reservations or fear based on the current regulations.

Individuals in the US have a legal right to make decisions regarding their medical care including consent to care and testing. We should afford the same rights to visitors and immigrants

entering our country and should not enforce mandatory HIV screening as part of the process for entry into the country.

Finally, HIV-positive colleagues visiting the US could contribute volumes of information and resources in combating the pandemic worldwide. Shared resources and knowledge, as well as experiences in fighting this disease are imperative to joint planning efforts.

For these reasons, we write to urge the Department to lift the ban on travel and immigration to the US by HIV-positive individuals and remove HIV infection from the list of “communicable diseases of public health significance”.

Sincerely,



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ABCD/ Boston Family Planning